University of Kent

The Glass-Ceiling in Working Cooperatives: Illustration of Female Participation in Andalusia.

David Zuluaga Goyeneche

Student no. 15906609

A dissertation submitted to the

Brussels School of International Studies

of the Department of Politics and International Relations

in the Faculty of Social Sciences

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Masters of Arts in International Development

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad and role model, who's proved me that with his love everything is possible.

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This dissertation could not have been finished without Dr. Bojan Savi 's support and insights. It is also my great pleasure to acknowledge my friend and housemate Juliana Massaro Boswell, whose encouragement helped me during the hardest times of this master. She will remain in my heart for the rest of my lifetime.

Abstract

Despite the connection that has often been made between the creation of Worker Cooperatives and women empowerment, little academic evidence has been collected. Both subjects pose numerous questions regarding International Development and gender equality in the workplace. This dissertation aims to analyse female participation in decision-making roles of Worker Cooperatives. As such, a qualitative methodology founded in the results of five semi-structured interviews is proposed. The sample corresponds to different female managers of the (worker) cooperative movement in Andalusia-Spain. The results display a complex approach of female management in Worker cooperatives, where a larger understanding of gender issues is depicted. For this reason, elements as motherhood, double shift, gendered sectors, the euphemism of equality and socialisation are tackled. In conclusion, the creation of worker cooperatives as a matter of women empowerment should acknowledge a broader understanding of gender issues to achieve its goals effectively.

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Introduction

Considering gender asymmetries in decision-making roles of Worker Cooperative's[1] is crucial for two reasons.

First, worker cooperatives (hereafter referred as coops) have been identified as a contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Birchall, 2009). Several International Development Institutions consider such business model as an answer for women's empowerment and equity in the workplace (International Labour Organisation (ILO) & International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), 2015; Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Internation Fund for Agricultural Development (FAD) & World Food Programme (WFP), 2012; Committee for Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), 2015; Majurin, 2010). According to UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, "[…] with an egalitarian ethos, participatory decision making, common ownership and commitment to goals beyond the motive of profit, cooperatives are expanding opportunities for women in local economies and societies throughout the world" (CICOPA, 2011). In his point of view, the cooperative model is more than an economically sustainable model, it is an enterprise form where gender equity indicators are above conventional business models.

Coop's role as a self-help organisation in post-conflict has also been recently remarked (ILO & CRISIS, 2010; Sentama; 2009; Date-Bah, 2003). Countries as Nepal have implemented coops as a form of community-based peacebuilding through affirmative actions with women (Ramnarain, 2014).

Second, particular attention has been given to businesswomen in top positions across the world market. One of the most remarkable efforts was "Women in Business and

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[1] As defined by Roelants, Hyungsik & Terrasi (2014) Worker Cooperatives are constituted prevalently by worker members, who are both owners and staff members. According to "The European Confederation of Cooperatives and Worker-owned Enterprises Active in Industries and Services" (CECOP, 2013), "Worker cooperatives' key mission is to create and maintain sustainable jobs, in a strong local development and wealth generation perspective. Their members are the employees of the enterprise, who thus jointly decide on the major entrepreneurial decisions and who elect and appoint their own leaders (boards of directors, managers, etc.). They also decide on how to share the profits with a twofold aim: a) to provide a fair remuneration, in the form of returns based on the work done (in fact an adjustment of the price of remuneration), and b) to consolidate the enterprise and its jobs over the long term by building reserves. Finally, in abidance by the international cooperative standards, worker cooperatives promote worker-members' information and training, a prerequisite to develop the autonomy, motivation, responsibility and accountability required in an economic world which has become increasingly insecure". (p. 3)

Management: Gaining Momentum" (ILO, 2015). Compared to a previous report sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)[2], the most recent showed that women have improved their participation in middle and senior management ranks. Nevertheless, top positions continue to be rare within females. In the author's words, "[…referring to the glass ceiling[3]…] the cracks might be bigger, but the ceiling is still not shattered" (ILO, 2015: 1).

Gender equity[4] has increasingly gained a place in sustainable and economic Development; while coops appear more often as a way to engage women's participation. As a result, coops have been perceived as a strategy of sustainable and economic development in many countries.

In that sense, it has been assumed that the non-hierarchical nature of coops facilitates members to control their working conditions democratically (Miller, 2012). Female members would have better chances to challenge the so-called *glass ceiling* in a cooperative than in a conventional organisation (Conn, 1990). Most likely, under this model women become active and self-conscious, enabling resistance towards patriarchal hierarchies (Oerton, 1996). In brief, through coops they strive to reduce social inequalities within a specific context (Collom, 2000; Gunn, 1984).

However, there is little evidence about the relation between coops and gender equality. Some scholars predict that the connection between the cooperative model and women empowerment is not necessarily active (Clugston, 2014; Senent, 2011; Stuart, 2007). According to Miller's (2012), equality between males and females occurs only to a certain extent. "Women in many worker co-operatives still face

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[2] "Breaking through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management" (Wirth, 2001) concluded that although females represent more than 40 % of the global workforce and have slowly moved up the organizational ladders, their share of management positions is less than 20%. In Wirth's words "[…] the more senior the position involved, the more glaring is the gender gap […] in the largest and most powerful companies worldwide, women's share in top positions is limited to a mere two to three per cent." (p. 25).

[3] The "glass ceiling" is a concept coined in the United States in the 1970s which depicts some of the invisible barriers that stop women from participating in senior executive positions (Wirth, 2001). The concept has gained worldwide relevance thanks to the reports mentioned above. Inspired on this concepts new metaphors as the sticky floor (Shambaugh, 2008), the firewall (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010) and the glass scalator (Williams, 1992) were born. Even more, in 2016 the *Economist* created a *glass ceiling* index which combines data on education, labour, salaries, child-care and female senior jobs.

[4] "Gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women in all spheres of life. It asserts that people's rights, responsibilities, social status and access to resources do not depend on whether they are born male or female" (ILO, 2007).

barriers and changes to their full equality regarding membership, status and participation […]" (p. 9).

Unlike the expected egalitarian and democratic coops, some local results show that female under-representation prevails (Shukla, 2009; Esteban, Gargallo, & Pérez, 2010; Conn 1990; Theis & Ketilson 1994, Espinosa & Zimbalist, 1981; Tang, 1993). As members, women do not have the same status as men and participate less in decision-making roles.

Then again, it should be acknowledged that there is little gendered-data about the cooperative enterprises. As a result, it has been hard to support with relevant figures the connection between women empowerment and their participation in coops.

In that regard, this dissertation aims to analyse female participation in decision-making roles of Worker Cooperatives. Through a qualitative methodology based on the results of five interviews from female managers in Andalusia's (Spain) cooperative movement; the positive relation between gender equality and cooperative enterprises will be challenged. The results portray a complex understanding of women empowerment through coops that analyses elements as motherhood, double shift, gendered sectors, the euphemism of equality and socialisation. In conclusion, a broader understanding of gender issues in coops is proposed in order to effectively achieve women empowerment and sustainable/economic development.

1. Discussion about core concepts

1.1 What is a coop? The origins of a movement

A cooperative enterprise is a business in which its members share collective ownership (Argaw, 2012). This model aims to aggregate members' purchasing and selling power to increase their social and economic participation. As such, it should be noticed that they are defined by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) (the worldwide organisation that represents this sort of enterprises) as: "An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations, through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise" (ICA, 2015).

Unlike conventional and private oriented enterprises, coops aim to solve not only economic needs but also social and cultural needs. In contrast with conventional shareholder businesses, coop's ownership is ruled by the principle "one member-one vote." In this model, representatives are chosen democratically and bind to a set of values and principles[5].

In Europe, the cooperative movement can be tracked back to the 18th century, when Claude-Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825) planned a new socioeconomic order organised by scientists and industrialists. His plan advocated for collectivism by abolishing inheritance and social classes (Shaffer, 1999). Saint-Simon stated that the individual property ought to be subordinated to a shared ownership (Ramírez, 1989). Although his name is widely acknowledged within the origins of socialism, his statements have also been related to the beginning of the "cooperative thought" (Shaffer, 1999).

Saint-Simon lectured Luis Blanc (1812-1882) and Philippe Buchez (1796-1865), two early theorisers of the cooperative movement. Both were members of the

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[5] The values are: self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. The principles are: Voluntary and Open Membership; Democratic Member Control; Member Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Co-operation among Co-operatives and Concern for Community (ICA, 2015).

utopian stream and developed productive cooperatives. Blanc encouraged the creation of worker-owned associations to improve production. In his opinion, this model was the best option for the working class to enhance life standards. As such, he believed that the State intervention would provide the initial steer of collective and self-reliable organisations (Shaffer, 1999). By the same token, Buchez drafted a set of bylaws that featured the principle of "untransferable and perpetual reserve fund" (Shaffer, 1999:169). Currently, this principle allows coops to protect and expand the capital bases of their enterprises.

Later on, the most famous character in the cooperative movement became Robert Owen (1771-1858). Being both industrialist and philanthropist, he did a remarkable job to improve working conditions. He problematized the current working conditions and stated the following:

> *The rate of wages has been gradually diminishing for some hundred years so that now it is not above one-third of what it used to be. But this is not all, for the same causes continuing to act, the wages must go on diminishing till a workman will not be able to maintain a family, and by the same rule he will at last not be able to maintain itself. (Claeys, 2005:133).*

For this reason, his solution consisted in the creation of cooperation villages where working-class could work and live. His project believed in the exchange between several cooperative villages functioning on a collective basis (Birchall, 1997). They were referred as -*Owenite Communities*- and originated in Brighton during the 1820s. Unfortunately, by 1833 the project failed as a result of government's repression towards trade unions and the impoverishment of coops' members.

Nevertheless, Owen continued to strive for a socio-economic system through unions. In his effort to defend the rights of the British working class, he contributed to the birth of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. This organisation was pioneer in mass unions against capitalistic traditions.

Thanks to that, Owen developed social and philosophical ideas that conceived the human beings as the result of social structures. In his opinion, the markets had the ability to socialise agents and their character. As such, he proposed to change individuals' conditions through the implementation of a new philanthropist socio-economic system (Birchall, 1997).

During the same time-period, Charles Fourier (1772-1837) pictured a similar project in France. He problematized the subsistence of the working-class and promoted producer-owned and producer-controlled businesses. His proposal was –*the phalanstery*-, a settlement where communities could develop collective forms of life under the principles of free and voluntary association. Fourier statements were a milestone for proportional income on the basis of productivity and solidarity links[6] within modern coops.

Even if Fourier and Owen both expressed their interest in settlements based on collective representation and autonomy, there were differences in their approach. While Fourier believed that salaries should be ranked according to a hierarchy of activities, Owen stated that wages should not vary within members. Fourier's idea was that *Phalansteries* were alternative to preserve pre-industrial economies where farming had a crucial role. For Owen, *Owenite Communities* would address industrial growth and scale economies (Uribe, 1965).

Their position towards state intervention also diverged. Owen though that before bringing philanthropists to lead such communities, local authorities should first encourage and implement such *Owenite Communities*. In turn, Fourier stated that the government role was rather unnecessary in this transition.

Even more, in *Owenite Communities* a wholly common lifestyle which censored marriage and intimacy, was envisioned. On the other hand, *Phalansteries* anticipated individual households with common means of production but diverse life-standards (*ibid.*).

In the 19th century, the cooperative movement was firmly strengthened by Professor Charles Gide (1847-1932). On the basis of the *Nîmoise cooperative* (a coop founded with Abeille Nîmoise and Édouard de Boyve), he created the Nime's School (in French, *École de Nîmes*). This project was guided towards the growth and creation of consumer coops as a solidarity alternative for economic systems. Like his predecessors, he condemned capitalist accumulation. His proposal was the creation

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[6] Furier is pioneer in what today is referred as Worker Cooperatives (Birchall, 1997).

of a cooperative association on an international scale, which could aggregate the whole movement towards the same purposes.

More concretely, his contribution was the understanding of solidarity and moral behaviour in coops. In his opinion, cooperatives are a thread that binds people together and simultaneously exclude others. Gide states that cooperative economy does not necessarily embed a new doctrine of love or moral conduct. In turn, it relieves the feeling of individual accountability when spreading the responsibility around the whole association. However, considering that morality relies specifically on individuals, the chances of immoral behaviour challenge such entrepreneurial associations.

> *[…] we must speed the coming of these new powers in the hope that in the end good will triumph over evil. Solidarity by itself cannot furnish a moral conduct to such as have none already; but granting the existence of a moral principle; it matters not whether it be egoism or altruism, solidarity supplies us with a leverage of superior strength. (Gide, 1915: 611)*

This being said, to the present day coops claim values of democracy, self-help, equality and equity. They have been related to social development (Argaw, 2012), and the empowerment of women in the workplace (ILO & ICA, 2015; FAO, IFAD & WFP, 2012; COPAC, 20158). As recently stated in the General Assembly of the ICA (2013) and published in the "*Blue Print for A Co-operative Decade,*"[7] women participation is considered a critical element for cooperative expansion. As a consequence, the organisation has committed to women empowerment while promoting their engagement in cooperative and democratic processes. However, as mentioned above little evidence has been registered about the way coops affect gender equity and female's empowerment.

1.2 Decision-making and Power: a matter of Social Relations

Even if coops display a collective nature, hierarchies still operate within them. For that reason, the notion of power should be tackled when considering the management and

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[7] An strategy that aims to increase the involvement, membership and governance of coops between 2011 and 2020 (ICA, 2013).

decision-making of worker cooperatives. Some of the theoretical approaches of such concept will lead the understanding of our research question.

In 1920, Weber (2009) identified power as a notion adopted in every human society since their earliest origin. He defines power as an existent opportunity or possibility within a social relationship. Power is a condition that allows individuals to accomplish their will through others. In other words, it is the ability to affect others behaviour deliberately.

Weber noted that power also implies the consent of those whose effects fall upon. As it follows, the concept combines structural and/or collective elements displayed in domination. For that reason, Weber's (1978) contributions define power in relation with domination.

> *"Power" (Macht) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis which this probability rests. "Domination" (Herrschaft) is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons. […] The concept of power is sociologically amorphous. All conceivable qualities of a person and all conceivable combinations of circumstances may put him in a position to impose his will in a given situation. The sociological concept of domination must hence be more precise and can only mean the probability that a command will be obeyed.* (p. 53)

Weber's definition remarks a distributive and/or "agent-centred" approach (A. Azmanova, October 6, 2015). He tackles power as an instrumental ability towards a goal. As such, his definition is crucial to understand the future approach of zero-sum power (Parsons, 1960; Mann 1986). This approach, in Heiskala's (2001:243) terms, refers to "the increase of A's amount of power as a resultant decrease in B's power and vice-versa."

On the other hand, Foucault (1982) assumed a different approach towards the concept. In his words Power is:

> *[…] a way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions. What, therefore, would be proper to a relationship of power is that it be a mode of action upon actions. […] Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted "above" society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of. […] A society without power relations can only be an*

abstraction. Which, be it said in passing, makes all the more politically necessary the analysis of power relations in a given society, their historical formation, the source of their strength or fragility, the conditions which are necessary to transform some or to abolish others. (p. 791)

In his perspective, power should be analysed as a circulating element that only functions when triggered by social networks and interaction. Power is never localised or static; no one possesses it as a commodity or a form of wealth (Foucault, 1980). His understanding is oriented rather towards an "action-centred" approach (A. Azmanova, October 6, 2015); and depicts the concept as a matter of relations inside a social network. Hence, power only exists when energised through actions. Actors are just the vehicles that enable it to circulate amongst societies. Power overcomes the mere nature of agents and flows anywhere social interaction happens.

With this in mind, it should be noted for this dissertation's aim power is understood in two ways:

i. An asymmetric element that produces zero-sum relations, where the social distribution of power results in opposite capabilities. This understanding, in general, creates tensions and conflicts

ii. A process of legitimation that develops through collective actions. Rather than conflict, this process happens thanks to a legitimate organisation. It leads to long-term social equilibrium.

Power is conceptualised by featuring either tenure or exercise. The first approach refers to a condition (substantive form) while the second approach expresses an action (verbalised form). However, in practise this conceptualisation reveals nuances. The condition might develop the intention to exercise power. For this reason, Dahl (1976) tackles the difference between having power and exercising power. On the one hand, power implies to secure a place that grants the possibility to intend legitimate actions under such tenure. On the other hand, exercising power is a variety of influences over certain actors in certain situations. These influences will enable or stop the execution of concrete actions (Múnevar, 2004).

This distinction has favoured a different understanding of individual and structural features of power. Power delivers a broad perspective about micro and macro asymmetries in social interaction. For this reason, Mann (1991) states that power depends on both parts of such dichotomy; power is framed as an individual tenure affecting other subjects and as a structural force exercised within human groups. While the first is the part, the second is the whole; one does not exist without the other.

It should also be noted that the theoretical approach about power has gained a relevant position amongst feminist theories. For them, power provided a broad understanding of the different forms of male domination. In their opinion, such concept is crucial in order to deconstruct the complexity of male domination and identify patriarchal dynamics.

When referring sexual division of labour it is inevitable to conceive the unbalance of male/ female power. Male and female asymmetries of power are revealed through structural and individual constructions power. Most important, tenure of power and exercise of power are embedded in a symbolic order that goes back to historical processes (Foucault, 1982) and long-term mental structures that are gendered (Bourdieu, 1998).

That being said, this dissertation approaches the *agent-centred* and *action-centred* power in a complementary way. Both contribute to the understanding of collective and individual forms of *cohesion* and *coercion*[8] in the organisational milieu. Even more, they offer a good base to understand gender dynamics and the forms in which they produce, reproduce and transform in the cooperative organisations.

1.3 Understanding gender through feminism and power

The gender concept cuts across individual experiences to establish a link between body and identity. Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours are categorised in the dichotomy of masculine and feminine.

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[8] While cohesion is understood as a positive stimuli positioned thanks to legitimacy and consensus, coercion is understood as a negative stimuli founded in impositions and sanctions.

The concept explains a fundamental principle of organisation that appears as a clear-cut division among human beings. Based on gender, it is possible to describe several relations in the social and cultural spectrum. As stated before, the concept of power will allow the historical understanding of gender through some key-decades of the 20th and 21st century.

In the early 20th century, gender was perceived as a personal attribute closely related to sex. As such, the term aimed to describe and define the most appropriate behaviour of each sex. Back then, the dichotomy between men and women was mostly influenced by the politeness rules of western tradition. However, this conception was dismissed as it lacked the necessary elements to explain the diverse situations of masculinities and femininities around the globe.

In the 1960s, the situation drifted when European and American feminists firstly challenged the social asymmetries supported by anatomical features. Since that moment gender inequity was remarked and women started striving to change their status. Social sciences firstly recognised sexual identity as a long-term process oriented by circumstances that exceed anatomical features. Such identity appeared as a collective conscience of the body that affected each's perspective.

As a consequence, it was recognised that individuals interiorise a system of symbols to interact within their backgrounds. According to Johnson (1965), the construction of sexual identity has two crucial moments, an identification with one gender and differentiation with the other. Most likely, men would identify with their father and differentiate with their mother in an early stage of childhood. Among women, it would develop the other way around.

During the 1970s and 1980s, feminist theories strove to transform oppressive conditions against women. Despite their limited theoretical and methodological scope, feminism accomplished a first step in challenging mental and social structures of patriarchy. In this period gender also achieved a political status that expands to both structural and individual features of gender inequality. It was agreed that male supremacy was not only occurring in face-to-face interaction but also in the economic, political, religious and communication milieus.

From a contemporary approach to sociology, Giddens (1989) established a link between daily life and patriarchal structures. For him, male's and female's behaviours are produced thanks to social norms which encourage gender stereotypes since early childhood. Girl's socialisation for instance, reinforces skills related to maternity and homecare.

The 1990s, on the other hand, witnessed the birth of anti-essentialist positions of gender. These broke the tradition of gender dichotomies in the male's and female's identities. They strongly criticised the simplicity of gender as a process of identification and differentiation. Scholars went beyond and explained that differences between men and women are not objective, but rather created through cultural processes. Male and female identities can be altered, faded and even declined. As such, Scott (1996) states that every social relation embeds a gender element, that pervades power dynamics and symbols.

Since then, gender became a concept that should be framed in certain historical conditions. Being a man or a woman is an attribute that can change according to the background. As a result, gender gained academic status and displayed a relational phenomenon ought to be understood in historical terms (Múnevar, 2004).

By the end of the 20th century and early 21st century, gender had enough relevance in social sciences research. Authors like Bourdieu (1998) are recognised for analysing male domination and explaining the naturalisation of behaviours that shape mental structures. For him, androcentric patterns have been internalised producing a social order that continually reaffirms patriarchy. In a larger perspective, he also states that institutions are pervaded with symbolic violence that through discriminatory actions limit female participation in top positions.

Butler (1999) is also remarkable for her performative approach, where gender is considered as an act rather than an attribute. According to this, before acting, subjects face gender as a traditional and perhaps obligatory action. Its *performativity* is embedded in the social context, it is a social practice that constantly reiterates. This does not mean that gender *performativity* is entirely chosen, but rather that the gender normative can be negotiated. Subjects do not perform only according to their gender

preference, they can weigh up based on the social legitimacy and sanction of their choice. Here is where social differences are recognised as actions of subordination.

Thanks to its cultural qualities, gender became a theoretical category included in the scholar agenda. Besides being a potential instrument for understanding social behaviours it started entailing epistemological implications about other social categories constructed *vis-à-vis* with gender identities. Among experts, this is called *gender intersectionality* (Brah & Phoenix, 20004). An approach of categories as race, ethnicity, class and many others, in interaction with gender. It expresses the need to go beyond the gender category and understand how does it intersects other features.

Parallel to this, the present century has witnessed male movements that reconsider masculinities and their power dynamics within social structures. Epistemologically, femininity and masculinity exist thanks to their mutual antagonism. Understanding one without the other offers an incomplete perspective. As a consequence, the latest approaches to gender strive to overcome the traditional female bias by incorporating men studies.

Gender has started to achieve improvements with a broader understanding of masculinities. Traditionally women have been either idealised or victimised by gender studies. However, for gender studies, both males and females face advantages and disadvantages regarding their gender identity.

In that regard this dissertation tackles gender as a "learnt identity, constituted and instituted by social relations, institutions, symbols and discourses that affect both males and females" [author's translation] (Lopes, 1996: 12). It is a social settlement which operates persuasively within society and individuals. Its persistency and legitimacy are culturally subjugated to masculine and feminine dimensions at the individual, interactional and institutional level (Bourdieu, 1998).

1.4 Gender and decision-making roles in the workplace

Several studies have remarked a male trend in decision-making positions. This has been referred metaphorically as "think manager, think male" (Willemsen, 2002; Powell,

Butterfield & Parent, 2002; Heilman, Block & Martell, 1995; Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Schein, 1989). However, the approach of gender in this field has remained stagnated in dichotomised perspectives of sex identities. Such studies have approached women as an unproblematic and homogeneous category. The fact that many times woman is framed within femininity, can be considered rather simplistic.

The analysis of gender and leadership has adopted perspectives where sex defines almost mathematically the leadership style[9] (Sánchez, 2009). Studies in this field have identified the presence of males/females in top positions, instead of the ways which gender identities affect their behaviour. They depict an ideological feature that lacks reliable results (Butterfield & Grinnell, 1999; Riehl & Lee, 1996; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995; Eagly & Johnson, 1990) and idealises female leadership in top positions.

In that regard, Blackmore (1996) proposes to stop analysing the differences between men and women when it comes to leadership positions. The questions should be rather oriented towards the understanding of the ways in which gender regulates organisational behaviour. As such, one will be able to recognise how leadership styles are related to masculine performativity (competitive, aggressive, determinate, and authoritary) and feminine performativity (passive, emotive, and sensible) (Alvensson & Billing, 1992).

In any case, it should also be acknowledged that many women have achieved a prominent place in the workplace. They often respond based on democracy, participation, and moral principles; in a moment where human organisations are undergoing numerous external challenges and demands. Such contribution has implied, in many cases, improvement in organisational results compared to those of the past. As a consequence, male leadership has been strongly criticised for its sense of authoritarianism, ambition, and pursuit of power (Sánchez, 2009).

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[9] Leadership theories have broadly undergone through three historical perspectives: personality approach (either a mythological or literary discourse that displays heroism in an epic character), posture approach (leadership is related to the followers and how their loyalty responds to a necessity of a leader and his charisma) contextual/situational approach (the leader and his followers are directly affected by diverse cultural, political, economic and social variables; which will define the terms and function of leadership). Given the extension of this dissertation, no theoretical framework about leadership is provided. If required, Fiedler (1967) contributions are a good insight on such topic.

The problem is that organisational models have limited femininity and/or female's participation through what has been conceptualised as *glass ceiling* (see footnote 3). In that sense, the distinction between internal/ external barriers (Swanson & Witke, 1997) will be used to explain more in detail the obstacles that females face when it comes to promotion opportunities and participation in top positions.

On the one hand, external barriers are defined as direct or indirect discouragements based on the sex. They are more commonly known as discrimination. On the other hand, internal barriers are personality traits related to idiosyncratic notions and supported in traditional significances. They are more complicated in the sense they are rooted in the cultural spectrum and display little tolerance to change.

External barriers can be identified within socio-demographic and contextual features that establish differences between males/females. As a matter of fact, these barriers make part of the collective imaginary of leadership. From a symbolic dimension they predict the effectiveness of each gender in managerial positions. These obstacles reveal the "rules of the game" that push women towards childcare and homecare while assuming an inferior status.

These restrictions are explicit to the extent they materialise the inequity that disadvantages women. Even though public policies have already confronted these, they have only achieved modifications in superficial structures.

In contrast, internal barriers are critical considering the fact they materialise several roles and personal choices. They can be identified as socially desired behaviours related to service, lack of competitiveness and lack of ambition towards power. Internal barriers are experienced mostly through mental structures. Because of these barriers, women embrace and accept a lower status and a smaller remuneration compared to men. This has been also referred by Levine & Cramrine (1973) as *fear of success,* a concept that refers to those personal challenges that exceed the professional merits when women pursue top positions.

In that regard, we acknowledge the categorisation of the glass ceiling and the internal/external barriers as a useful element to understand the limited representation

of women management in coops. These concepts help the research question to separate mental structures deeply rooted in the individual from structural situations visible in the context.

1.4.1 Gender and decision-making roles in coops

As explained before, coops have been identified as a valuable strategy for many women to overcome barriers and several social vulnerabilities. This model, compared to conventional companies, is considered to be more resilient regarding female participation. The fact that workers are owners and owners are workers, makes the shared vision of members prevail over the individual capital.

A coop can be a very powerful scenario for the construction of gender equality. According to CICOPA (2015) "where ever relevant statistics exist (Spain[10] and Italy[11]), numbers confirm this hypothesis". In a more empiric approach, they highlight stories that prove how women can improve life quality with coops. For instance, at the *"Koperattiva Ghawdxija tal-Bizzilla u Artigjanat"*, a lace-maker cooperative in Malta, women members have derived several health benefits due to their participation in relation the coop. The textile coop *"Creciendo Juntas"* in Argentina, is also remarkable considering it is run by employees of a private business who bought the company in bankruptcy[12]. They have found an opportunity in the crisis and helped the recovery of many other enterprises in their community.

Additionally, the latest findings in this subject correspond to those discussed in the debate panel held on March 10th (2015) at "Cooperatives: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" (a side event to the United Nation's 59th session of the

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[10] Figures about the females in the Spanish cooperative movement will be addressed in the results.

[11] "Italian surveys show that women not only constitute 61% of their [cooperative] workforce but that 23.6% of them hold top positions (or 26% including positions of responsibility in the management and control of the cooperative), compared to 16% in limited liability companies." (CICOPA, 2016)

[12] This has been named as worker buy-outs and is defined as a business transfer to employees on the form of a cooperative. "Generally speaking, two main scenarios leading to this form of establishment of a cooperative have been observed: 1) Retiring owners with no successor, heir or family member willing to take over the enterprise: the enterprise is handed over to the employees; the employees then convert it into a worker cooperative 2) Employee buyouts of enterprises in crisis (failure or bankruptcy): enterprises at risk of closure or after closure, which are bought out by their own employees who then convert them into a worker cooperative. (CECOP, 2013:3)

Commission on the Status of Women) (ILO/ICA, 2015)[13]. According to them, 75% of participants feel that women participation in cooperatives has increased during the past 20 years.

Regarding decision-making roles, approximately 66% of the answers identified with the feeling that women's opportunity to participate in governance and management is a remarkable feature of coops. The survey also revealed that there seems to be a growing attention about gender issues, women leadership in cooperatives and only-women coops. Regarding sectors, North America and Europe displayed serious involvement of women in financial and social coops; while India, Latin America and Africa remarked agricultural coops.

Additionally, half of the respondents felt that there are not enough training sessions about gender equality and women's empowerment. According to them, cultural issues are the most influential barrier to gender equality in cooperatives (as agreed by 65% of respondents).

As a consequence, ex-president of ICA, Dame Pauline Green "highlighted the unique effectiveness of the cooperative model in providing women with a dignified way out of poverty, often away from violence and abuse" (ILO News, 2015). Additionally, she stated, "I am also thrilled with the survey's indicators towards a high number of women in leadership positions, particularly in our finance and insurance co-operatives" *(ibid.).*

Since the adoption of the United Nations Beijing Declaration on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (1995)[14], there has been a positive trend of women's involvement and empowerment within the cooperative movement. In general, coops have been identified as a better business for gender equality than those in the private or public sector (as stated by 80% of the survey respondents). Quoting ILO's Cooperative Unit Chief, Simel Esim, "…cooperatives have a history of contributing to equality as well as to economic and social empowerment…" (ILO News, 2015).

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[13]The poll included nearly 600 on-line respondents identified as cooperative practitioners, civil society organisations, academics and government workers. 50% of the answers came from Europe, 15% from both North America and Asia and the rest from South and Central America, Middle East and Africa.

[14] A declaration that laid the foundation for action towards gender equality in aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life.

Unfortunately, ILO/ICA (2015) results reflect an apparent gap in gendered-data about the cooperative movement. Even though it is a very valuable effort, it should be noticed that all of the answers are based on random perceptions of people in the international cooperative movement. In this sense, it is hard to establish the representativeness of the sample regarding such topics. The data is rather about perceptions than about statistics. However, it should be acknowledged that the study displays a growing attention towards gender issues; an issue that deserves to be addressed rigorously by Development organisations and the cooperative movement.

2.　Approaching the Interviewees: Study methodology

2.1 Methodological approach

On the basis of the research question "How do worker cooperatives affect female participation in decision-making roles?" an interpretive/hermeneutic methodological approach will be conceived. As such, the independent variable is the *worker cooperatives* and the dependent variable is *women's participation* in managerial positions. This will facilitate the analysis of female participation in the cooperative movement and its effects on gender equity.

Regarding the lack of quantitative data, the data collection is entirely qualitative. Empiric observations and first-hand sources of information are the dissertation's evidence. For this reason, key actors and institutions were identified and contacted to bring additional support.

2.2 Method

The research method was the collection of qualitative data through semi-structured interviews addressed to subjects and experts. Thanks to the support of the "Spanish Worker Cooperatives Confederation" (COCETA), a member of the "International Organisation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives" (CICOPA), five female managers with membership of the "Andalusian Association of Women in Cooperatives" (AMECOOP) were interviewed. The interviews were held in Andalucía- Spain during the June 28th and 29th and took between 30 and 60 minutes approximately. In all cases, interviewees chose as the meeting point their main offices. The economic sectors of their coops varied between education, cleaning, healthcare, communications and law.

The questions addressed women's social-economic status in the cooperative workplace through her job experience. During the whole session, they were encouraged to give their opinion about women participation in the cooperative movement and the Spanish workplace in general. The questions considered each women's experience, and in those cases where there had been participation in conventional enterprises, a comparative approach was undertaken.

Finally, it should be noted that four sessions were subject interviews, while one was an expert interview. Although the information collected varies significantly between subject interviews and expert interview, the questions for the latter were more focused on her experience. However, her background and expertise in gender and cooperative studies was exposed rather naturally.

2.3 Population

The Spanish cooperative movement was foreseen as a good scenario for the research question due to several facts. The country has a long cooperative tradition that dates back to the foundation of "Cooperativa Mondragon" in 1956 (one of the biggest cooperative with a presence on five continents). Spain is one of the few countries with organisations like AMECOOP, concerned about female empowerment in the cooperative movement; which members were willing to support the research methodology. Thanks to that, the Spanish cooperative movement is on of the few places were gendered-data about coops can be found. Even more, Spanish is the mother tongue of the researcher, and Spain was his closest Spanish speaker location.

The targeted population was addressed with a *snowball technique* that thanks to AMECOOP's support enabled the researcher to contact female members in managerial positions and invite them to participate. Once some of them expressed their interest in taking part in the interviews, direct contact was established via e-mail.

2.4 Sample

From the selected group it should be noted that all of the five respondents were founding members in the cooperative. Except in the case of a retired ex-manager, all of them were currently managers in their coops. Three of the interviews were held in Granada with representatives of SIERRA DE LAS NIEVES SOCIEDAD COOPERATIVA ANDALUZA (cleaning/health sector) and HUERTO ALEGRE SOCIEDAD COOPERATIVA ANDALUZA (education sector); while two interviews took place in Seville with representatives of SIERPES ASESORES SOCIEDAD COOPERATIVA ANDALUZA (law sector) and CKL COMUNICACIONES SOCIEDAD COOPERATIVA ANDALUZA (communication sector).

All the interviewees agreed to the terms and conditions of the interview and were happy to participate (see Appendix 1). Even if there were interviews significantly longer than others, it should be acknowledged that all the interviews were above the expectations and provide valuable inputs for future research in gender participation amongst coops.

2.5 Study limitations

As in any other research, some limitations should be acknowledged. First of all, the sample interviewed was contacted by appealing to CICOPA, COCETA, the "Andalusian Federation of Worker Cooperatives" (FAECTA) and AMECOOP. Once the general assembly from AMECOOP was contacted, they agreed to diffuse the interview invitation among female managers in coops. As it was expected, the sample was reached with a "snowball technique". No random technique was applied to attain a representative sample. As a result, the women's perspective on gender equality and women empowerment might have encouraged them to participate. Probably, opinions outside from AMECOOP's network differ.

Second and as a consequence of the first limitation, most of the women have a clear position against gendered unbalance of power. AMECOOP functions as an organisation that brings women of the Spanish cooperative movement to defend

female's rights in coops. Their opinion is rather aware and well informed about gender issues. Although this situation is useful to answer the research question, there could be evidently a bias.

In any case, the research had to acknowledge this situation before approaching the population. Hardly anyone will openly express arguments against gender equality. These attitudes are rather unconscious, and most of the time manifested by implicit actions.

3. Gender and decision-making roles in coops: The Andalusian case

Fair conditions to access positions of responsibility is crucial for conventional enterprises aiming competitiveness. In coops, besides market competitiveness, it is a matter of equality and democratic member control (see footnote 5). Enabling socially diverse access to top positions in coops is both a pledge of social equity and a strategy of organisational growth (in the economic and social sense).

The cooperative movement, in its endeavour, needs to enhance every option of competitive management. The enterprises must provide recruitment processes for managerial profiles that constantly enable better administration and competitiveness. For coops, decision-making roles are more important than in conventional enterprises. The relevance of their shared vision draws heavily upon the skills of such profile. As such, activities assumed by decision-makers are essential to achieving common cooperative goals.

Despite that, managers' gender within the cooperative movement displays a socio-cultural bias. According to the results collected, the cooperative movement limits female profiles inside managerial positions. As a consequence, there is a significant restraint for numerous managers and their proposals[15].

In that regard, this research studies how does the Andalusian cooperative movement encourages or hinders female participation in decision-making roles. It argues that although a positive relation has been established between coops and women empowerment, there is little scholar and practical evidence when implementing Development policies in this subject. As such, we identify some of the barriers that affect gender asymmetries regarding cooperatives management in Andalusia (Spain). The results are based on the interviews with female managers of Andalusian coops and connect their personal experiences with the literature review.

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[15] It should be clarified that such situation is not necessarily intentional. Worker organisations and labour in general have a long-term male tradition that originated behind women's back. The Rochdale Cooperative, recognised as the most ancient epitome of coops, had no women as a consequence of political, religious and social conditions of the 19th century.

In here, sexual division of labour is understood from mental and collective structures that shape power tenure/execution. Women's opinions and the ways they cope with power asymmetries are tackled to understand the gender norms that affect their trajectories in coops.

The geographical scenario was chosen because compared to other countries Spain has some advantages to analyse women's participation in cooperatives. While most of the countries in the cooperative movement struggle to collect gendered data in the workplace, Spain has already elaborated some figures about gender issues within coops[16]. According to the most recent reports of COCETA, 50% of the Spanish cooperative workers are women (CICOPA, 2016). Out of them, 39% are in top positions and decision-making roles. Very encouraging when considering that in conventional enterprises, only 6% of women have a place in top positions *(ibid.)*.

Nevertheless, the results of the qualitative data largely differ from the figures explained. As stated by one of the interviewees, "Women lack representation and top positions are still reserved for males." [Author´s translation] (S.K, personal communication, June 29, 2016). In FAECTA for instance, 50% of the meeting board are females but there has never been a female president *(ibid.)*.

As it follows, some of the common factors that affect female's participation in decision-making roles within cooperatives will be exposed.

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[16] According to COCETA (2013) "The worker cooperative is a legal form of company, where individuals who associate and contribute full or part time, make any economic, social or professional activity to jointly produce goods and services for third parties. Cooperatives have a specific financial economic structure. Its capital is variable according to the origin (internal or external) and if they're provided by members or third parties with no membership. The Spanish Constitution provides special treatment for cooperatives in Article 129.2 by stating that -the public authorities shall efficiently promote the various forms of participation in the company and encourage, through appropriate legislation, cooperative societies-." [Author's translation]. Additionally it should be noted the concern of the quoted document regarding gender when stating the implementation of a non-sexist language in what has foreseen by the 3rd Organic Law from 2007; which defends gender equity in the cooperative principles among others.

3.1 Maternity and childcare

One of the most remarkable elements that affects women participation in the workplace is maternity. The same way it happens in conventional enterprises, motherhood has been a notorious barrier among women managers in the cooperative movement. All of the interviewees agreed that having children limits their possibilities to participate in decision-making roles. As a consequence, family expectations are considered when analysing women's underrepresentation in cooperatives management.

Since early socialisation, many females are strongly driven towards motherhood through games and toys (Giddens, 1989). Traditionally, having children has been a sacred endeavour biologically addressed for women. Not having children after mid-age can be perceived as a betrayal of the female gendered identity. A situation which can seriously frustrate personal and social expectations amongst females.

Maternity displays a good example of Bourdieu's (1998) naturalisation of social expectations when merged with organic features. Maternity moved from being a biological ability to become a strong social expectation. Somehow the preservation of human species has become an argument to enforce motherhood. As a consequence, it is women who have assumed most of the weight of such pressure.

The biological relevance of motherhood during the first stages of childhood has overemphasized mother's roles. Fatherhood, on the other hand, has the breadwinning role. To that extent, traditional gender identities dismiss women's contribution to the home economy the same way they reject male's contribution to homecare. In many contexts, women who disregard motherhood provoke similar social frustrations as men with smaller financial incomes than their female partners.

With this in mind, interviewees displayed three positions towards this topic. The first one regretted on the lack of responsibilities assumed by their partners regarding childcare. For many of them exclusion of managerial positions in the cooperative workplace was not necessarily about women who avoid top positions to take care of their children; but also about partners who avoid childcare responsibilities.

There is an actual limitation if you have kids and family. I am married, and I have children. My son is 21 years old; he is raised. However, if I had only one, it was because of my job. Having to work, to take care of your son, and much more[…] the coop constrains your life. My husband, he sorrows my participation in the cooperative. This is more than a full-time job. We have to work on weekends, meet at unusual schedules… [Author´s translation] (R.B, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

The second was a rather active position towards the partner's selection. Her observation was the following:

"Women have to be very aware when choosing their partners, the casting must be done well […] We need someone who loves us because of what we are and can become, not because we are attractive and good housewives." [Author's translation] (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

The third and last argued that women should decide what their priority is before having kids. For them, it should not be considered as a negative approach, but more like a realistic idea which embraces that maternity and management are contradictory.

Children are an impediment for women. Unfortunately, it is time-consuming to raise them, and besides that, first years they need their mother attention. Even with the father's support. Dads cannot breastfeed; dads cannot perform certain functions that genetically correspond to women. […] I believe the first year children need a commitment of both parents, but especially from their mother. That sacrifice takes its toll in the workplace. Women should think this before having babies [Author´s translation] (S.K, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

The three positions portray the dilemma women face regarding management and motherhood. The first opinion can be labeled as passive and negative, the second as active and optimistic and the third as active and negative. When in managerial positions, Maternity has several implications in the workplace that affect what should be an entirely personal decision.

In that sense, the discussion is not whether women should or shouldn't have children. It is rather about the fact that having children should not become a limitation towards career promotion and professional growth. Women should not have to challenge expectations and risk motherhood frustration for participating in management.

Nevertheless, when considering motherhood amongst cooperatives, it should be noticed that this model provides certain advantages for females. Often cooperative principles give more attention to maternity needs than conventional enterprises. As members and employees, women in coops enjoy more flexibility to adjust their schedules with parenthood.

One of the interviewee's remarks how her cooperative enterprise considers the needs of childcare:

> *[In the coop…] we favour mothers and their maternity leave. They have the flexibility to take their children to the doctor, to educate them and bring them to school. But. […] [In a regretting tone] If our husbands and societies supported with quality childcare and distribution of house care responsibilities, we could take more decision-making roles in the cooperative movement. [Author's translation]* (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

This puts in evidence that even with the flexibility of the cooperative workplace, the motherhood endeavour is overwhelming for females. Women, as socially expected, make a strong commitment to their children. "Children are more important than anything, and there is no one else who can raise them better than us. That is why granting that role to someone else is not an option." *[Author's translation]* (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

In practice, motherhood is an internal and external barrier. External to the extent women lack support in their home and workplace to cope with all the expectations placed on them. Internal in the sense that raising children is a personal expectation encouraged since early forms of socialisation. Their personal commitment with childcare makes the rest of the goals less important.

Although cooperatives can improve the support in the workplace to attend childcare necessities, it should be noticed that many other elements work together and discourage women's management in cooperative enterprises.

3.2. Double shift

This concept has been referred as a situation that presumes a damage amongst women who cope with both family and professional roles (Hochschild, 1989; Parvathy, 2006). In regard of the workload these females might assume, they have been identified as *superwomen.*

Initially, this situation responds to sociodemographic and economic variations that affected the western structures of families during modernity. Sociologically, the increasing labour force that followed the industrial revolution had a substantial effect on the family roles (Acereda, 2010). They were flexibilised, to re-evaluate the role of the husband as the breadwinner. Females became part of the workforce in the market. Even more, wives replaced the labour force during war times, when most males were required to fight.

However, the incorporation of women into the workplace has supposed tensions. Women were entitled to new professional responsibilities but still hold their traditional responsibilities at home. Men got a relief in their economic responsibilities but were never entitled to new responsibilities at home. As such, traditional housewives who rely economically on their husbands, are poorly perceived. But simultaneously, women with ambitious professional goals are considered as a bad profile for a family project.

In contrast, men who assume home care and economic responsibilities exceed expectations. They have been popularly labeled as *wedding material*. For females, assuming both homecare and financial responsibilities is rather ordinary.

In other words, women are paradoxically encouraged to involve in the public sphere but not enough to overcome male's status. Females are getting more and more involved in the workplace, but there has been no consideration about the workload faced at home. In that sense, they struggle more than males to escalate in the organisational ladder.

As illustrated by one of the interviewees, "If the society and our partners assisted childcare and homecare, we might be able to obtain top positions easier" *[Author's*

translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016). Later on in the interview she reiterates:

> *[…] the big pitfall of women is conciliation. Males have not conquered the domestic domain and women do not have the support of partners nor society. As such, they assume the family role and disregard their professional promotion. When a woman finds support in their partner and society, or has a lot of money to pay a person of trust to take care of their children; then she chases professional promotion. Otherwise, no. The challenge refers professional conciliation with family responsibilities. [Author's translation]* (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

Compared to conventional enterprises, in coops the *double-shift* can be stronger. Although managerial responsibilities are very similar in both enterprise models, the shared ownership of the cooperative model gives extra weight to decision-making.

Some of the interviewees agreed the responsibilities in coops are intense. "[Referring to a conventional enterprise…] I started very young there. But according to the experience, the amount responsibilities would increase. In the coop is the same, only that responsibilities here are non-stop" [Author's translation] (R.B, personal communication, June 29, 2016). Another one adds:

> *[…] Is easy to work with someone else and not taking responsibilities, [..as an employee..] that stress load is not there. You have it only when being an entrepreneurship. Especially when you have to lead and be sure most members are happy. You always have to think of new business lines. Maybe the stress load is what I like the least about my coop. [Author's translation]* (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

As shown above, the *double-shift* supposes an external barrier for women in management of coops and conventional enterprises. In general, women recognise that domestic responsibilities affect their performance in the workplace. However, the collective decision-making of coops can suppose an extra load for the *double-shift*. This can be one of the reasons of the reasons female managers in coops are underrepresented. Then again, the double-shift is not necessarily present among all female managers; it assumes a family situation that can or cannot exist.

3.3 Feminised and masculinised working sectors

An essential element perceived in the data collection was the economic sector of the interviewees. Considering sexual division of labour (Bourdieu, 1998), it should be noticed that the economic sectors where female managers locate make a notorious difference. Out of four economic sectors in the interviews, three were significantly feminised (education, cleaning, and healthcare).

Initially feminised sectors represent a counter element against female discrimination in the workplace. They are a good option for women to incorporate and undertake an enterprise. However, many times such fields lack status and paritary economic reward compared to other sectors. In the words of an interviewee in the cleaning sector:

> *To put it in a rude way, -we moved from cleaning other's mess in our house to clean some else's mess in another house-. But it was the same job, that is why I understand is not well paid nor recognised or anything. It is a feminised sector.* [Author's translation] (A.P, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

From the education sector, the interviewee explains:

> *During all these years women have been the majority [in the education sector]. However, there were always more males in managerial positions. In our facilities, in the school, it is more or less the same amount of women and men. Maybe a bit more women, but we do want to be an example of equality between men and women.* Unfortunately, also in our facilities, there are more males in managerial positions than women. [Author's translation] (R.B, personal communication, June 28, 2016,).

Initially, it could be thought that feminised sector privilege women participation. However, as explained by the interviewees, women were still struggling to achieve a relevant socio-economic status to access managerial positions.

Female's participation in masculinised sectors is not better. For instance and according to one of AMECOOP's member, the agricultural coops are the ones that struggle the most with female inclusion in Spain. The sector has a close link with land

ownership, which has been traditionally reserved for males. Only by the 20th century, the laws that enforced succession to only sons and sons in law were modified. Before that, daughters and daughters in law were forbidden to own lands legally (M.D., personal communication, June 29, 2016). But even with the modification in the ownership law, women struggle to participate in the agricultural business. As a consequence, in this sector only-women coops appear as a strategy to overcome the barriers such masculinised economy.

All of the interviewees agree that there is still a sectorial challenge for women. "Most women, and especially female managers, are in sectors related to care services. Although coops allow women to organise and conciliate in any field, it has been hard to include them in coops related to technology, research, and law" [Author's translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 29, 2016). As both cause and consequence, women seem to be excluded and less driven by those traditionally masculinised sectors.

Considering only-women coops (mentioned above), some elements should be noticed. Involving women in masculinised sectors in the name of equity might produce unexpected consequences and adverse social reactions of exclusion[17]. Only-women coops effectively allow females to organise and conquer several phases of their sector's supply chain. Through them, women avoid facing many of the external barriers of "both-genders coops."[18]

> *[Referring about only-women coops…] In some sectors moving from working with both genders does not happen that naturally. It is something that has to be worked on. Building confidence Is necessary. We definitely need males in only-women coops and vice-versa. However, the majority are only-male coops. It is not even intentional; it happens rather naturally. But what's curious is that we do not call those coops -only-male coops-. But females, we do have that label.* [Author's translation] (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

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[17] This situation has been largely discussed in politics when considering the "female quotas." The strategy has been considered many times as counter-productive to the extent it has become only a formal requirement without any consideration about female inclusion (Fuentes & Peña, 2009).

[18] The original term in Spanish is "cooperativas mixtas", however considering the difficulties for translation the term "both-genders coops" was coined.

In that sense, only-women coops can be conceived rather as a transition stage. But the final goal is to build cooperative organisations where no one has to be excluded because of their gender. The real world has men and women, and soon or late women will have to deal with male domination. What is more, after a period of time only-women coops risk to lose status and credibility; just like it happens with feminised sectors in conventional markets. This transition is an excellent seedbed for women empowerment in the workplace, but certainly, the whole process must involve males to increase their impact in society at the long-term.

A good example is the case of a female manager in an only-women cooperative, who ended up having a sensation of surrender towards many of her peers.

> *[In my sector…] the market expects a male lawyer between 40 and 60 years with a suit. That gives clients some confidence. But I struggle to display that. Like most of my colleagues, I am a young female. In fact, there is discrimination. But there is not much I can do. I think it will change with future generations. Young people markets will better allow me to provide our services. Old people are stagnated in the past.* [Author's translation] (S.K, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

As noticed, female's involvement in a masculinised sector is a double challenge. They risk not only to have overlapped responsibilities at home and in the workplace but also to the lack of recognition in the field on the basis of their gender. Unlike females, males have built along centuries a solid status in several economic sectors. Women, on the other hand, face an external barrier that displays them in many sectors as incapable of achieving the same results men could. The situation is pretty much the same for males in feminised sectors, however, the social status that feminised sectors enjoy is usually smaller.

In that sense, coops and only-women coops provide a good alternative for associated females to challenge gender stereotypes in masculinised sectors. As explained by one of the interviewees, with the cooperative model *the glass ceiling* (see footnote 3) is less notorious. "In my coop, there is no glass ceiling. We make it where we want and can" [author's translation] (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

Additionally, it should be noticed that gender stereotypes operate in a broad sense, affecting many levels of the supply and demand chain (which are usually both-

genders). As a consequence, the presence of female managers in coops can lead to a frustration of the market expectations and therefore the business' failure (especially in masculinised sectors). On the other hand, if female co-operators devote only to feminised sectors there is no challenge to the male hegemony in the market. Challenging male domination in certain economic sectors is a long process, and it most likely requires the sacrifice of many women before equality is achieved[19].

Generally speaking, economic sectors portray another dilemma for gender equality through coops. On the one hand, women can get involved in a masculinised milieu in order to challenge gender stereotypes in a given sector. As such they favour better working conditions for future female generations. However, they face the risk of failure regarding the rigidity of gender asymmetries, especially when concerning economic revenue. On the other hand, women can get involved in a feminised milieu and have the privilege to assume a smaller risk. However, this represents less socioeconomic status and the enhancement of traditional gender stereotypes for future generations. While males also struggle to success socioeconomically, it should be noticed that the competition normally does not exceed markets laws. Women, on the other hand, face greater economic and cultural challenges.

3.4 The euphemism of equality

Within the conventional and cooperative organisations, there is a widespread belief that equality has been achieved. Many cooperators and entrepreneurs are convinced that there is no longer discrimination towards women in the workplace recruitment and promotion. It has been assumed that gender equality is achieved. Somehow, the discourse about gender equality has become a tautology that looks real to the eyes of society.

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[19] As explained by one of the interviewees "I believe we have to make like a basketball strategy. One of us clears the defence out of the way so the rest of us can make it to the hoop. But you have to be aware that your own hoop will be exposed. Otherwise there is the idea that is you who failed" [author's translation] (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

In that sense, if female's professional careers face barriers it is assumed that it is their fault. Apparently, opportunities are open for men and women, but if women do not make it to the top it is because they do not want to. Victims become guilty in a sort of reversed effect. External barriers are dismissed to give more attention to internal barriers. The logic is that females are the ones eluding decision-making roles in the organisations.

Additionally, it has been identified what Santos (2000) calls the *exception myth,* which argues that if some females can be managers, all of them can be managers. Based on the fact that if it is possible to someone, it is possible to everyone; discrimination is denied. This has been mostly criticised for disregarding the *intersectionalities* that lead in particular cases to female's promotion.

As a consequence, it is necessary to be careful when considering internal barriers. They shall not be an argument to justify inequality. Internal barriers are a category that should not be used to blame women. The point is not to validate the discourse of individual meritocracy while ignoring structural limitations. It is rather to recognise the diversity of barriers and the forms in which they operate over individuals.

In worst case scenarios, there is not only gender equality euphemism but also gender equality ridiculing. Exposing the unbalance of power can be seen in many cases as inappropriate. Unfortunately, women expressing awareness and unconformity about male domination, face the risk to be jeopardised.

The long history of male hegemony makes hard to think how a society with better gender equity looks alike. In general, there are little experiences that display what the ideal egalitarian society is. Patriarchal tradition has made acceptable small forms of discrimination that are hard be aware. So even without assuming that gender equality is achieved, it is hard to notice several forms of discrimination (or what in Spanish is called *micro-machismos)*.

Regarding the information collected in the interviews, it can be observed that AMECOOP has developed training events in gender issues with FAECTA members. However, the results have not been what it was expected.

> *We have tried to train FAECTA males and females in gender issues. But among men, there is no success, at least not in our federation. They think they should not be trained*

> *in gender issues. It is as if it was overcome, or it had nothing to do with them. But in fact, there are many chauvinist behaviours…* [Author's translation] (R.B, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

In other cases, women fighting for gender equality within the organisation have been included in the *"equality ghetto."*

> *When you constantly fight for women rights they put you in the -equality ghetto-. This means you can participate in everything related to equality, but when you want to move to "more serious topics" (like taxation and finances); then they do not want you there anymore.* [Author's translation] (M.D, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

On that basis, it should be remarked that coops struggle more than conventional enterprises to identify inequalities. It has been assumed that with democratic control of members, women have no other barriers to overcome. Discrimination in coops many times appear less visible because some of the external barriers are removed. However, less visible discriminations are the hardest to challenge. They are "naturalised" and widely accepted between males and females. They seem not to hurt because of the ways they operate in mental structures; but in fact they are the most harmful to gender equality.

3.5 Gendered forms of socialisation and coops management

As explained, socialisation has a decisive role for individuals. Males and females face a strong tradition that affects their social customs on a daily basis. This becomes an implicit and powerful norm, which constricts most of us to fit social expectations, for instance, those of the workplace.

In the words of an interviewee:

> *Early education teaches us to serve and take care unconsciously. Men are taught to take care of themselves. That is what makes a person a person, but in women is rather hidden. Even when going to a university and studying a career, (a crucial aspect of building yourself as a person and performing a professional position) women struggle to put themselves at first. Women are not taught to do that. For us is a conquest to be*

a subject, we are educated to be objects. [Author's translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

Socialisation encourages women to assume roles related to private and domestic spaces. When in managerial positions, female stereotypes are related to passiveness, emotiveness, and sensibility (Andruskiw, 1980). On the other hand, socialisation has encouraged men to assume roles related to the public domain. When in managerial positions, male stereotypes are rather associated with competitiveness, aggressiveness, determination and authoritarianism *(ibid.)*.

In the workplace, this had led to the belief that women can be better managers (Butterfield & Grinnell, 1999; Riehl & Lee, 1996; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Their personal traits fit an alternative leadership that is more democratic, inclusive and considered about team-work.

In any case, as explained before, it is not necessarily all women who display these traits, but rather their gender identities. These can be altered, adopted or declined by both sexes to a certain extent. From an academic perspective, what interviewees refer as women behaviours should be understood as gender identity.

In the interviews performed, women express a clear-cut difference between female and male management in coops. Similarly to many other contexts, these two identities are the exposition of gender's antagonism.

In this excerpt it can be perceived how female management is characterised:

> *When there are disagreements, what we [referring to women][20] do is to accept it as something normal amongst any human community and as an opportunity to improve. When there is conflict, we put it in evidence through debate. We sit down and discuss what problems underlie. You find everything, but in general, women are more pragmatic. We want this to work. […] we do not hold the status of a particular position to say –well I am not engaging with this or that-. We are rather versatile. We can be here [in the central office] but also in ludic activities supporting our team. That is a women's feature. If people is missing, I can replace them…* [Author´s translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

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[20] The original word replacing "we" was "nosotras"; the Spanish conjugation for the first plural person of females. This, to notice she refers to all women in general.

Later on, she puts her explanation in opposition with male management when referring to power:

I have not discussed it with other women, but in my opinion, for women taking seat has to do with commitment rather than power. Perhaps, if I had a more influential position, it will be more for the enthusiasm to contribute. [Author´s translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

While females (or more accurately, feminine leadership) tend to be democratic, participative, ethical and socially-centred (Sánchez, 2009), male leadership is perceived oppositely.

In my experience men keep their distance from problems because of their position in the workplace. Is like the attitude many men have. They expect servility for having a top-position […] among us that does not happen. I would never ask someone to bring me a coffee. I have the moral authority of my experience and training. No imposed authority. However, when I worked with males, I could feel how men imposed themselves through fear and censorship. Even more, they questioned our actions to humiliate us. I have perceived that in my coop. Many in our cooperative have perceived it. [Author´s translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

Regarding this gender stereotypes, it should be noted that there is a general incentive to pursuit decision-making roles in the workplace. For both, men and women, securing a managerial position represents a status increase. It is usually a reason to congratulate and celebrate. However, with the ladies, there is a nuance. Promotion among married women can also be perceived as an obstacle to accomplishing family responsibilities (attention to her partner, less time to take care of children, less time to do chores). As such, women risk obtaining less support towards professional promotion.

In this case, not necessarily explicit forms of discouragement appear. As it happened with one of the interviewees this lack of support was rather discreet.

I have a son, but if it were not for the group of women who helped me raise him it would've been hard [to make it to the top]. He went to a daycare since he was three until the end of his childhood. It has been hard to find how to take care of him. […] In any case I have felt much identified with the coop thanks to my female colleagues who

supported me during that period. If it were not for them we would not be where we are. [Author´s translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

Although this situation displays women's solidarity, the line that separates it from compassion is slight. This behaviour encourages males distance from childcare or homecare responsibilities and enhances the idea that women requires external assistance to accomplish their professional goals.

Another important element about gender stereotypes in managerial positions is the context (as explained in footnote 9 with the situational approach of leadership theories). Despite it is hard to picture every single scenario of female management, it should be remarked that the traditional role of women at home has hindered their experience (biographical and historical) in management.

As such, females can resort to flexible and considered forms of authority as a search of approbation from their subordinates. As explained by another of the interviewees, imposing authority as a female was problematic at first. While telling her experience when male managers left the coop to make part of a new project, she explains… "at first, we repeated male schemes and it did not work. We did not have the personality to impose, nor the authority to lead the team anywhere" [Author´s translation] (M.L, personal communication 45:42, June 29, 2016).

What is more:

> *"[…Moving from a men to women management…] people told us we were not worth for that. People confronted us directly […] there was a sort of upraise which questioned everything we did. A difficult situation that came one males left the coop. People questioned our work, our style, and our know-how. Even worst, we did not have arguments. It was difficult, we had to replace people, the team was not consolidated, and employees came in and out very easy…"* [Author's translation] (M.L, personal communication, June 29, 2016).

In any case, it should be noticed that thanks to that situation their cooperative is still growing. It helped them to figure out their own management in concordance with their gender identity. Either intentionally or unintentionally, with sacrifice or without, frustrating expectations or exceeding them, women identities bring a new perspective to management.

Female socialisation has been identified as a remarkable element in managerial leadership; thanks to their performance in both conventional and cooperative enterprises. Organisations are undergoing a period of constant change where many times females have proposed alternatives better than those of declining male schemes.

In coops particularly, women have had a better scenario to commit and deliver. Despite that the cooperative model still presents several internal and external barriers to female management, "when incorporating democratic values to the management system, diversity is achieved even without willing" [Author's translation] (M.L, personal communication 45:42, June 29, 2016). Undoubtedly, coops still have much work to do regarding gender equality in the personal and collective scale. However, member's democratic control has allowed women to involve better in decision-making processes where they have been traditionally excluded.

Conclusions

This dissertation offers a comprehensive analysis to understand power unbalance in coops regarding gender. Overall, decision-making roles in coops are not only in charge of usual management activities but are also endeavoured with the shared vision of the cooperative model. For this reason, recruitment and election of coop managers should be as inclusive as possible. However, it has been evident that there is a strong socio-cultural bias that affects some profiles in this regard.

Even if the cooperative model is based in egalitarian and democratic control, gender inequalities still persist among them. Female participation in coops face similar situations than those of the conventional enterprises. Alike the conventional workplace, gender identities in the cooperative workplace have pervaded mental structures that go beyond individuals.

In the cooperative workplace, this has been revealed through complex processes of female inclusion to managerial positions. Male hegemony in there has prevailed thanks to complex and long-term dimensions. However, unlike conventional enterprises, coops depict less visible forms of discrimination that need to be challenged.

In that sense, the cooperative model is an evidence of the complexity of patriarchy in the workplace. Even if there is technically less barriers for women, exclusion remains. Internal and external barriers in coops operate in a more complex way that impedes to easily identify power unbalances of gender.

For that reason, this dissertation encourages an understanding of female participation in coops that goes beyond the mere workplace. Elements as motherhood, family structure, economical sector and gender socialisation were considered as significant to answer the research question. The qualitative approach allowed the observation of "implicit forms of discrimination" towards female managers. Power dynamics regarding family structures, economic milieus and socially accepted discourses were envisioned. However, as any other qualitative analysis multiple variables can be added or deleted in order to contribute to the discussion in different contexts.

As a result, coops ability to encourage female participation in governance and management should be carefully investigated; especially when addressing Development policies. A better implementation of strategies aiming women empowerment with coops, requires going beyond democratic and egalitarian values of Worker cooperatives. It is imperative to recognise that coops by themselves are no guarantee of women empowerment.

At the same time, it should be noticed that coops can be a very good start regarding women's comprehensive inclusion in the workplace. Not only in the bottom level but also in the top level of several economic activities. If addressed properly, coops are potentially able to increase women empowerment within several socioeconomic and cultural contexts. They can be an effective way to enhance women capacity to organise. Even more, to engage civil society and gain government recognition.

Therefore, Development policies targeting women empowerment need to go beyond the socio-economic model to include cultural elements. Which, if not addressed correctly, could make women empowerment within coops a gender-blind strategy.

Those policies need to evaluate the ways women status within coops can be raised. Aspects as position, income, working hours and many others are ought to be included for such matters. Coops themselves, ought to revaluate work policies in order to include considerations about gender issues internally. Affirmative-action and cross-training strategies appear as a reasonable option to ensure a more egalitarian participation of women. Mentorship programmes can also be useful for engaging both sexes in the cooperative workplace. This will encourage female's participation in decision-making roles and their inclusion into masculinised sectors.

It is also the International Cooperative Movement endeavour to raise gender-awareness among males and females. For them, women inclusion is an opportunity of promotion and expansion. The strong presence of females in the workforce represents an increase in the visibility of cooperatives worldwide. The cooperative movement can take advantage of the gender equality trends, to position itself amongst International Development programmes, peacebuilding and economic reforms worldwide.

In that sense the Andalusian cooperative movement, is a good example to illustrate the consciousness that strong cooperative organisations can engage. As observed, female there still face underrepresentation, small status and reduced participation in decision-making roles. However, most of the women interviewed have been part of the cooperative movement since the foundation of their coops and have committed with such economic model for most of their lives.

In conclusion this dissertation provides a good outline for future qualitative analysis regarding gender equality in coops. It is a way to challenge the lack of quantitative data in the field. Or as observed with Andalusia, to notice the differences between quantitative data available and personal considerations about gender issues in the cooperative workplace.

Through the cooperative movement and their coops, females interviewed have found a form of resistance against male hegemony in the workplace. At the same time they have engaged with more democratic and inclusive processes towards their colleagues. Unfortunately many of the coops are still in the only-women stage, where reserving a place for women is imperative to avoid several barriers to reach their full potential.

In any case, the most important is to remark the need for further research about female's role within coops. The connections established between Democratic control of members and gender equality cannot be taken for granted, especially when it comes to worldwide programmes and strategies. This dissertation is a step to address such aspects from a scholarly approach. Even more, to overcome one of the biggest challenges, the belief that cooperatives are entirely driven by egalitarian principles and member's democratic control.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that male and female co-operators should assume an open approach that improves cooperative management. It is not women who should assume a male leadership to incorporate in decision-making positions; neither man who should assume a female leadership to ameliorate management within coops. The point is to work together and develop a form of cooperative leadership that benefits from both gender identities at top positions levels.

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